

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 EUR-25 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5982

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 14743

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT, ECON, VS, CB

SUBJ: VISIT OF SIR ROBERT THOMPSON TO MR 3

FOLLOWING CABLE SENT ACTION SAIGON INFO AC CANTHO DANANG
NHA TRANG FROM BIEN HOA AUGUST 14 BEING RPT FOR YOUR INFO.

QUOTE:

C O N F I D E N T I A L BIEN HOA 0399

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT ECON VS CB

SUBJECT: VISIT OF SIR ROBERT THOMPSON TO MR 3

SUMMARY: SIR ROBERT THOMPSON TOLD MR 3 CG LTG NGUYEN VAN
MINH DURING AUGUST 13 VISIT THAT PHNOM PENH WILL NOT FALL,
THE BOMBING HALT NOTWITHSTANDING. THOMPSON SAID HE ARRIVED AT
THIS CONCLUSION FOLLOWING VISIT TO THAT BESEIGED CITY OVER LAST
WEEKEND. HE SAID ALSO HE AGREES WITH REPORTS THAT KHMER ROUGE
AND NVA ARE NOW FIHTING EACH OTHER OVER RICE IN CAMBODIA. SIR
ROBERT AND MINH AGREE THAT CRUCIAL PERIOD FOR VIETNAMESE WILL
BE DURING NEXT RICE HARVESTING SEASON. BOTH AGREED FIGHTING
IN MR 3 WILL TAKE SHAPE IN WHAT MINH CALLED A "RICE WAR." MINH
HAS REINFORCED LONG KHANH RAILROAD DEFENSES WITH TWO BATTALIONS
OF RF FROM OTHER PROVINCES AND ONE BATTALION OF BORDER RANGERS.
THE ELUSIVE MILITARY CONVOY FOR PHUOC LONG PROVINCE IS,
ACCORDING TO MINH, STILL IN CAM RANH. REPORTS NOW PUT NUMBER
OF COMMUNIST KIAS DURING JULY BATTLE IN PHU GIAO AT MORE THAN
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400. LONG AN AND HAU NGHIA PROVINCE CHIEFS REPORT THAT RF

COMMANDERS IN THOSE PROVINCES HAVE BEEN RECEIVING LETTERS FROM COMMUNISTS REQUESTING MEETINGS TO DISCUSS MATTERS. LONG AN IS SAYING NO AND HAU NGHIA IS SAYING YES. BOTH HAU NGHIA AND LONG AN WILL EXPERIENCE RICE SHORTFALL BECAUSE OF LACK OF RAINFALL.
END SUMMARY

ON AUGUST 13, SIR ROBERT THOMPSON VISITED MR 3 FOR ABOUT FOUR HOURS. HE WAS ACCOMPANIED TO MR3 BY HIS SECRETARY AND COL. MCMAHON. AT BIEN HOA HE MET WITH MR 3 COMMANDER LTG MINH AND 18TH DIVISION COMMANDER BG DAO. ACCOMPANIED BY CONSUL GENERAL WALKINSHAW, LTG MINH, AND CG3 POLITICAL OFFICER JACOBINI, HE THEN VISITED LONG AN PROVINCE CHIEF COL. LE VAN NAM IN TAN AN, AND HAU NGHIA PROVINCE CHIEF LTC DOAN CONG HAU IN BAO TRAI. PRESENT AT THE LATTER TWO MEETINGS WAS 25TH DIVISION COMMANDER BG LE VAN TU.

1. BIEN HOA, MR 3 HEADQUARTERS. AFTER A SHORT BRIEFING BY LTG MINH, SIR ROBERT BEGAN TO DISCUSS CAMBODIA FROM WHERE HE HAD JUST RETURNED. HE SAID HE BELIEVES SITUATION THERE IS STABILIZING AND IS OF OPINION PHNOM PENH WILL NOT FALL AFTER THE BOMBING HALT. HE ALSO NOTED THE KHMER ROUGE HAD WITHDRAWN ITS FORCES A SMALL DISTANCE FROM PHNOM PENH, AND THAT THERE WERE REPORTS KHMER ROUGE AND THE NVA ARE FIGHTING EACH OTHER FOR RICE IN VIETNAM-CAMBODIA BORDER REGION. SIR ROBERT AND LTG MINH THEN AGREED THAT NEXT PHASE OF FIGHTING IN SOUTH VIETNAM WOULD PROBABLY BE A "RICE WAR" AROUND JANUARY OR FEBRUARY OF 1974 HARVEST TIME.

LTG MINH THEN RECALLED FIGHTING IN LATE JULY BETWEEN THE 18TH DIVISION AND 165TH NVA REGIMENT FOR CONTROL OF HIGHWAY 2A-1A IN PHU GIAO DURING WHICH MORE THAN 300 NVA WERE KIA. INTELLIGENCE REPORTS NOW INDICATE THAT ENEMY KIA EXCEEDED 400. CONCERNING MILITARY CONVOY THAT SUPPOSEDLY LEFT SAIGON FOR PHUOC LONG VIA MR2, LTG MINH SAID CONVOY WILL NOW COME FROM CAM RANH RATHER THAN SAIGON. THE CONVOY IS APPARENTLY STILL IN CAM RANH.

LTG MINH THEN DESCRIBED SECURITY MEASURES HE IS TAKING TO PROTECT RAILROAD IN LONG KHANH AND BINH TUY. TWO BATTALIONS OF RF FROM LONG AN, GIA DINH, HAU NGHIA, AND BINH DUONG, PLUS BORDER RANGER BATTALION, HAVE BEEN SENT TO BOLSTER RAILROAD'S DEFENSES.

2. LONG AN. AFTER BRIEFING BY PROVINCE CHIEF, SIR ROBERT QUESTIONED COL. NAM ABOUT ECONOMIC SITUATION IN LONG AN.
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"COL. NAM DECLARED THAT 10,000 HECTARES OF PREVIOUSLY UNUSED CROP LAND HAVE BEEN BROUGHT INTO PRODUCTION SINCE THE CEASEFIRE. NAM ESTIMATED THAT THERE ARE STILL 30,000 MORE HECTARES THAT COULD BE FARMED WITH RETURN OF PEOPLE AND SECURITY. TAX COLLECTIONS ARE UP ABOUT 30 PERCENT SO FAR THIS YEAR IN LONG AN, BUT RICE HARVEST IS EXPECTED TO BE LOWER THAN 1972 HARVEST DUE TO LACK OF RAIN.

TURNING TO MILITARY SIDE, COL. NAM POINTED OUT THAT ENEMY

STRENGTH IN THE PROVINCE HAS DECREASED SINCE THE CEASEFIRE, BUT ENEMY INITIATED INCIDENTS FOR FIRST SEVEN MONTHS OF 1972 AND 1973 WERE AT ABOUT SAME LEVEL. THERE HAVE BEEN NO ENEMY INITIATED INCIDENTS SO FAR IN AUGUST. HE REPORTED RF COMMANDERS HAVE BEEN RECEIVING LETTERS FROM THE VC REQUESTING MEETINGS, BUT COMMANDERS ARE NOT RESPONDING.

3. HAU NGHIA. DURING BRIEFING, PROVINCE CHIEF LTC DOAN CONG HAU POINTED OUT THE VC HAS PREVIOUSLY BEEN BUYING FOOD IN ALL FOUR DISTRICTS OF HAU NGHIA, BUT HE HAS TRIED TO CUT OFF THE TRADE. HE IS STILL ARRESTING PEOPLE WEEKLY. HOWEVER, ESPECIALLY IN TRANG BAN, FOR TRADING WITH THE ENEMY. LTC HAU HAS ALSO HEARD RUMORS ABOUT NVA-KHMER ROUGE FIGHTING IN CAMBODIA OVER RICE. HE SAYS REPORTS ARE UNCONFIRMED, HOWEVER. HAU NGHIA RF COMMANDERS ARE ALSO RECEIVING LETTERS FROM THE VC ASKING FOR MEETINGS. ONE HAU NGHIA RF COMMANDER APPEARED AT APPOINTED TIME AND PLACE, BUT VC FAILED TO SHOW. TURNING TO ECONOMIC SITUATION, LTC HAU REPORTED THAT THERE ARE CURRENTLY 350 HECTARES OF SUGAR CANE IN HIS PROVINCE, AND THAT PLANS FOR 1974 CALL FOR PLANTING 2000 HECTARES OF SUGAR CANE AND REOPENING HAU NGHIA SUGAR MILL. WALKINSHAW

UNQUOTE.
MARTIN

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